

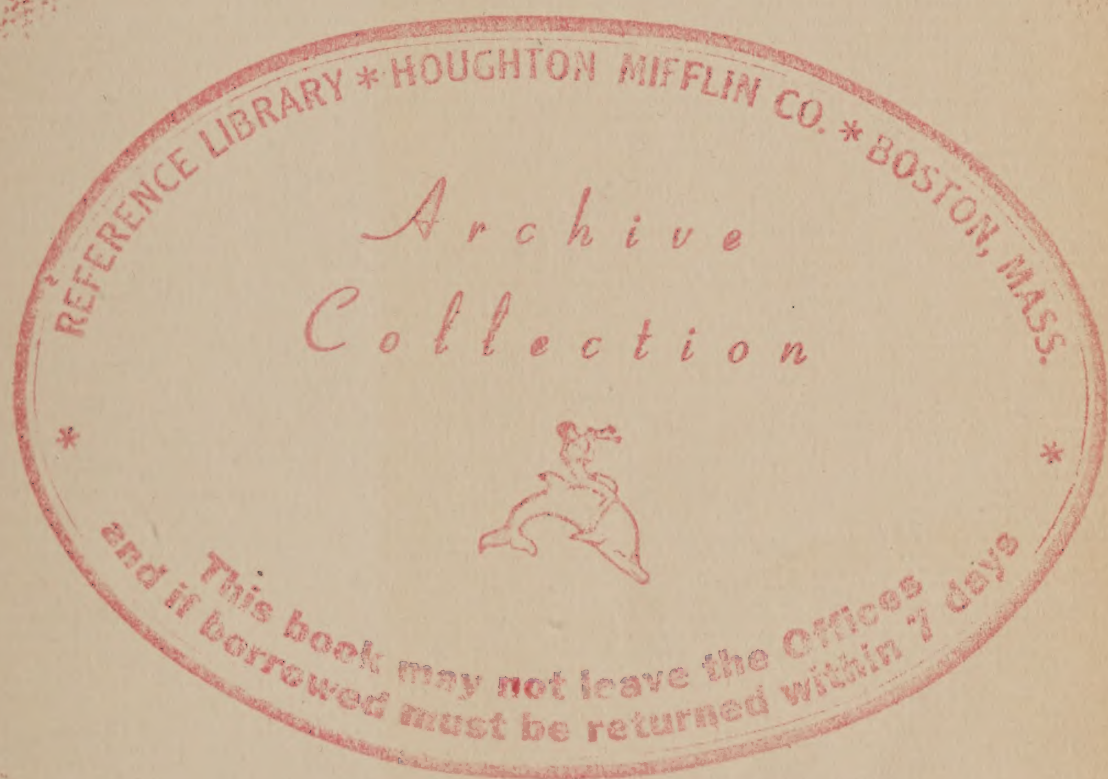
THE STAR JEWELS

AND
OTHER
WONDERS



BY

ABBIE
FARWELL
BROWN



By Abbie Farwell Brown

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WONDERS



WAVILOCKS AND THE CRAB (Page 10)

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BY
ABBIE FARWELL
BROWN

PICTURES BY ETHEL C. BROWN



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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To the Mermaid of the Pink Grotto

Thanks are due to the publishers of *The Churchman* for permission to reprint "The Star Jewels," "The Balloon Boy," "Trees," and "Child or Fairy;" to *The Interior* for "Karl and the Dryad;" and to *The Congregationalist* for "The Green Cap."

“Why nature loves the number five,
And why the star-form she repeats.”

FORE-WORD

IN the land of Far-away,
In the time of Used-to-be,
Wonders happened, so folk say,
Which we all should like to see.

But perhaps, if we knéw how,
In the pleasant land of Here,
In the lovely time of Now,
We could witness sights as queer.

Oh, for Faith without an end,
And the blessed eyes to see !
Let us beg the Fairies send
Such a gift to You and Me.

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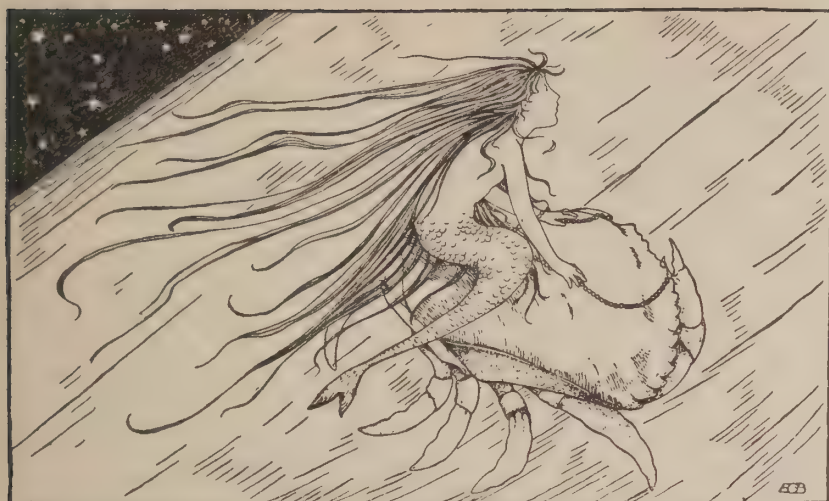
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THE STAR JEWELS



THE STAR JEWELS

ONCE upon a time there was a little mermaid who lived down at the bottom of the sea in a cave of pink coral. Her cheeks were as pink as the coral itself ; her teeth were like a row of the pearls which hung around her neck ; and her hair—which was very long and wavy—was as green as the greenest seaweed you ever saw. And though green hair sounds strange to us, it was accounted a mermaid's greatest beauty. Her name was Wavilocks. Also she had instead of two rosy feet a funny little scaly tail with which she steered herself through the water. She was a famous swimmer.

Wavilocks was a pretty little mermaid, and old Triton, her father, doted upon her and spoiled her, as foolish papas sometimes do. He gave his little daughter everything that she wanted, — everything in the wide ocean which a sea-child could wish. She had her own little coral playroom, with its toys of shell and sponge; and her pets among the fishes and curious ocean creatures. She had a living flower-garden of beautiful sea anemones, pink and purple, yellow and red. She had a little chariot all her own, in which to ride about the sea, like the grown-up ocean folk. It was of pinky, pearl-lined shell, most beautiful, and it was drawn by a span of sea-horses, the sweetest little fellows in the whole kingdom of Neptune.

She had also the prettiest things for her toilet, — golden combs, with which to comb her long green hair, mirrors of polished pearl, and fans of coral, scarves of silky seaweed, and ornaments of shell. But the thing of which she was most proud was the beautiful necklace of pearls which her father had given her. All the mermaids wore lovely necklaces, but

Wavilocks had the most beautiful of any. Old Triton, who knew every cave and corner of the sea, had scoured and scraped the ocean treasures to find the finest pearls for his little daughter. She wore always about her neck a long rope of them, wound around and around, such as the Sea Queen herself could not match. Some of the pearls were as big as kernels of corn ; some were as big as grapes ; and a few were like hen's eggs, as large and smooth, and twice as white as the whitest. Nobody ever saw such pearls as Wavilocks wore about her neck every day of her life. The sea-mothers found fault with doting old Triton, and said he had no business to let a little mermaid wear such gorgeous jewels. But when he told Wavilocks of this, she chuckled and said that they were jealous because they had no such jewels themselves. She may have been partly right about this, but they were right too in what they said.

Now you would think that Wavilocks must have been contented and happy in her lovely home, where she had everything that a little

mermaid could wish. And she was happy so long as she could have her own way. But there came a time when she could not have her own way, and then she grew sulky and discontented. For days and days she moped in her coral playroom, and nothing that poor old Triton could do made her smile.

What do you suppose she wanted? She had happened to sit up one night later than a little young mermaid should, and she had seen the diamond stars twinkling in the sky. She wanted them for a necklace! She declared that she *must* have them for a necklace. She was tired of her beautiful rope of pearls, and vowed that she would not wear it any more unless she could have the starry one to wear with it. This made poor Triton very unhappy, for he had taken great pride in his beautiful gift to his little daughter, but now she cared nothing at all for it, and demanded something which he could not give her.

The naughty little mermaid teased and wept and refused to be good. "I shall cry always, always, until I have those lovely stars. Boo-

hoo!" she sobbed. Her father was at his wit's end. He worried and worried because it would be dreadful to have Wavilocks always crying for something which he could not give her. He worried until his green hair began to turn white, and his poor old eyes looked as wild as those of a cuttle-fish. Then he said to himself:

"I will go to King Neptune and see whether he can help me or no. Perhaps he will tell me how I can get the stars from the sky for Wavilocks, for I am sure I do not know."

That very night Triton went to the King's beautiful palace in the deepest, greenest part of the sea, and told him how his little daughter needed a starry necklace which he could not get for her. And he begged the Sea King to tell him what must be done. But Neptune looked very stern.

"Tell your child," he said, pulling his sea-green beard, which waved to and fro in the water, "tell her that she is an ungrateful daughter, and that I forbid her to think any longer of the far-off jewels. Already she has the most beautiful necklace in the sea, — such

a one as not even my Queen can match. A starry necklace is fit only for the Sky Queen to wear. No other may possess those wonderful jewels. There are fair enough gems in the sea for any mermaid's use. If she cannot be content with them she shall be punished."

Old Triton was alarmed at these words, for he could not bear to think of his dear daughter being punished. Very sadly he went home, and very sadly he told Wavilocks what the King had said.

"He does not wish me to have the starry necklace, because the Queen has none," pouted the naughty little mermaid. "But I must have it, I *will* have it, or I shall cry always and always."

Instead of spanking her, as he should have done, Triton only shook his head and said sadly, —

"I would gladly give it to you if I might, dear daughter. But the King has spoken. The stars are not for you; you must not even think of them again. Never go out when they are shining in the sky. Be a good girl, and

to-morrow I will bring you a beautiful new coral belt, such as no mermaid ever before wore."

But Wavilocks sulked and sniffed and declared that she did not want a coral belt, and she would not kiss her kind father good-night. He sighed and went away, poor merman, to his thinking-place in a rocky cavern.

Now there was one creature who had overheard the talk between Wavilocks and her father, and his little eyes gleamed wickedly at mention of the starry necklace. The Crab was the most evil of all the sea-creatures, and old Triton had forbidden Wavilocks ever to play with him or listen to his words. The sea-folk hated the Crab because of his mischievousness and because of his wicked history. He had not always been the sneaking nuisance of the sea. Once, long before, he had lived in the sky. He was a cousin of the great Sky Crab, the guardian of the star-jewels, and once he too had helped to take care of them. But because he had tried to steal a few for his own use, the big Sky Crab had indig-

nantly cast him out of heaven, down to the lowest depths of the sea. Oh, yes, the Crab knew all about the stars which Wavilocks so longed to own!

Wavilocks had never been told this story, but she knew that she must never have anything to do with the ugly, crawling fellow. And so, when she heard his harsh voice close beside her cradle, she ought not to have listened.

“Hist!” said the voice. “Hist!”

Wavilocks knew who it was, and she knew that sly whisper meant mischief. She herself was feeling very naughty.

“What is it, Crab?” she whispered.

“I have accidentally overheard what you were saying to Master Triton,” he hissed, “and I do not blame you at all. The King is wrong. You, fairest Mermaid, ought to wear the starry necklace, — it is your right. The jewels are said to be even more beautiful when closely seen. But they are hardly fair enough for you!”

So spoke the wicked old Crab with a flat-

tering tongue. Wavilocks was pleased. "I should like to see them closely," she said.

"One could climb up there, I think," said the Crab slyly.

"Oh, how? Tell me how it can be done, dear Crab?" cried Wavilocks eagerly. The Crab winked one eye.

"There is a silver staircase that leads up to the moon. Sometimes one can see it, sometimes not. To-night it is very bright. The moon is a round silver doorway through which streams light, and beyond it is a beautiful land where my cousin, the Sky Crab, lives and has charge of the star jewels. I have always wanted to go up there and see him, but I do not care to go alone. If I could find some one to go with me —" The Crab stopped and sighed.

"Oh, how I should like to go with you, Crab!" exclaimed Wavilocks, sitting up on the edge of her cradle. "But my father and the King have forbidden me even to think of the starry jewels."

"Nonsense!" whispered the Crab. "Come

with me to-night, and for my sake my cousin will give you all the stars you wish."

"Oh, I dare not go!" sighed Wavilocks. "The King will punish me for disobeying him."

"Pooh!" snorted the Crab. "He would never know. Let us go this very night. I long to see my dear cousin. I can scarcely wait another minute!" (What a wicked story that was!)

Wavilocks slipped out of her cradle. "I can hardly wait another minute to have those star jewels!" she cried. "Yes, I will go. Come then, wise Crab, and show me the way."

"I will take you upon my back," said the Crab. "We shall travel faster so, since you have no feet for climbing."

Wavilocks seated herself upon his broad shell, and away he crawled, the wicked fellow, very stealthily, so as not to be seen by the grown-up sea people, and especially by old Triton.

Up and up they went until they came to the surface of the sea, where the big silver

moon was shining upon the water, glorious and bright.

“Look where the flight of silver stairs comes down to the sea,” said the Crab, pointing with his claw. “We will climb up there, Wavilocks, and pay a visit to my dear cousin. How glad he will be to see us!” And he chuckled wickedly to think how he was going to repay the Big Crab for having turned him out of the sky.

Out to the bright spot upon the water where the silver moonbeam staircase touched the sea crept the Crab, with Wavilocks upon his back. And no one saw them go. They reached the foot of the stairs and began to climb, — up and up, step by step, while the little mermaid’s green hair streamed out behind. Her long pearl necklace she used as a bridle, and so she drove her strange steed up the steep way, until they reached the silver gateway of the moon. The door was open, and from the wonderful sky-land beyond the light streamed out, so that Wavilocks was dazzled. But she was even more dazzled when they had passed

through the gateway and came out upon the wide sky floor, where burned and flashed, with a thousand rainbow colors, the five-pointed star-jewels which she had seen shining from afar.

“Oh, the beautiful diamond stars!” cried Wavilocks. “Let us make haste to find your cousin, the Big Crab, that he may give us some for my necklace.”

But the Crab winked his eye. “We need not wait for that,” he said. “My cousin loves me so well that I am sure of his generosity to you. Let us pick all we wish first, and then we will go to him. But hist! We must be very quiet about it, or the other sky-people will learn what is being done, and will be jealous.”

The two set eagerly to work, gathering up the jewels which lay sprinkled over the velvet sky-carpet like daisies in a meadow. The Crab gathered them star by star with his clumsy claw, as one would pick berries. Wavilocks scooped the five-pointed stars by handfuls, and poured them into the great conch shell which she had brought for the purpose, until it was brimming over with rainbow flashes.

“Oh, what a wonderful necklace I shall have, — grander than any one ever saw before!” cried the greedy little mermaid.

“Oh, how angry the old Crab will be when he sees how we have robbed his treasure!” chuckled her wicked companion to himself; and they went to work even faster than before.

Suddenly there was a loud noise behind them.

“Wooh! Hooh!” cried a terrible voice. “Robbers, wretched robbers, what are you doing with my jewels?”

Wavilocks screamed and the Sea Crab gave a snort of fear. There behind them was the Big Crab, sprawling his enormous ugly shape among the stars. His great claws were snapping viciously, and his goggle eyes were glaring at the pair, as he crawled nearer and nearer.

“It is the Crab!” gasped Wavilocks’ companion. “I am lost!” and away he scuttled as fast as his claws would take him, while the little mermaid clung to his back as well as she could, for he had quite forgotten her. Then

began a dreadful race to the shining stair-case. The great Sky Crab clattered after them, puffing and blowing out fire.

“Wicked Sea Crab,” he cried, “so it is you who again are seeking to rob me of the precious stars entrusted to my care. You have come up here from your nasty, moist den in the sea, to which I tossed you. Moreover, you have brought this strange sea-creature to help you steal the jewels. Ah! this time I will punish you both.”

They could feel the flaming breath of the Big Crab. It scorched, it sizzled, it melted the hard shell of the Sea Crab until it became soft and useless. It crisped the mermaid’s pretty green hair, which streamed out behind her in their rapid flight. Wavilocks screamed. Her awkward steed hissed with terror, dislodging many stars from their settings as he scrambled among them. At last they were almost safe at the head of the staircase, when Wavilocks felt the great claw of the Big Crab seize the necklace of pearls which hung about her neck. Snap! The string broke, and the pearls

went flying helter-skelter over the sky, scattering themselves among the stars.

“My necklace, oh, my necklace!” wailed she, but they could not stop to gather up the lost pearls.

They had reached the stairs. The Crab plunged forward, and they tumbled and rolled and slid down from the sky to the sea, into which they fell with a great splash. Glad enough they were to cool their poor scorched bodies in the wetness. Down, down, they sank together to the bottom of the ocean, two very miserable creatures.

Now the Crab had shriveled and shrunk and become the tiniest, most pitiful little fellow you ever saw. Moreover he was now quite helpless and unprotected.

For his hard shell, which had served him as a shield against his enemies, was now melted and soft, and was no longer of any use to him. He was at the mercy of the whole sea, which was indignant at his new wickedness. Thenceforth he must slink and hide away wherever he could, an outcast thief. He became the

Hermit Crab, whom to-day one finds borrowing the shells which other tiny creatures have abandoned, creeping away into dim corners, and always carrying his home upon his back, because he is afraid to venture his poor, unprotected body out of doors.

Neptune decreed that the wicked Crab needed no other punishment worse than this. As for Wavilocks, she also had been punished enough. The beautiful green hair which had been her pride was scorched into an ugly brown. Sobbing with shame, she cut it off — all its splendid length, and tossed it away into the sea. Sometimes you may find strands of it nowadays, washed ashore by the tide. Long, long afterward her green hair grew again ; but for months and years she was laughed at and teased about her short mop of brown hair, so unfashionable in the sea-kingdom. A sad little mermaid she was in those days. For not only had she lost her wavy locks, but the lovely rope of pearls was gone forever, scattered among the jewels of the sky. You can see some of them to this day if you look hard

among the flashing stars; bright jewels they are, but they do not twinkle like the others. The Big Crab now watches over them also with his other treasures, and it would have to be a sly thief indeed who could steal them back again. Wavilocks must go without any necklace, although the other mermaids wear theirs proudly. Yes, she has no necklace at all. For what do you think became of the stars which she went so far to steal and had so sad a time in gathering?

Wavilocks had clung closely to the conch shell which held her stolen treasure during all the terrible time of her fall down the silver staircase. And when she came to the bottom of the sea she still held it fast. But alas! When the poor little scorched mermaid came to look at the stars which she had hoped to wear about her neck, she found that they had sadly changed. The shell was full of something living, something squirming and cold. One by one she took out the five-pointed stars which had been so beautiful, and they had come alive; they were star-fish! The first

star-fish that had ever been seen in the ocean.

How Wavilocks screamed when the moist, writhing feelers touched her hand! So this was the end of the lovely necklace which she had hoped to wear so proudly, — a conch-shell full of ugly, wriggling sea-stars. She tossed them away as far as she could, and fled sobbing to her poor old father, who tried to comfort her, and forgot to punish her for disobeying him.

Poor little sea-stars! One cannot help pitying them, who used to be the beautiful jewels of the sky. One sees them sometimes lying in the pools, red and purple, blue, pink and yellow; beautiful colors indeed, such as jewels have, but no longer sparkling and clear, as once they were. They lie and stare up wistfully through the green water, up at the sky which was once their home, up at the other stars of which they were once the shining brothers.

And it was all the fault of the naughty little mermaid, who was not wise enough to know when she was happy.

OCEAN WONDERS

Far below the purple waves,
In the hidden ocean caves,
Floating softly to and fro,
Wonder-creatures come and go.

Monsters hideous and queer,
Curious lovely shapes and dear
Dwell beneath the silent tide,
Where the rainbow fishes glide.

Who can say what things may be
In the mystic, magic sea ?
In the depths so cool and green
Which no man has ever seen ?
And what wonders happen there
Such as mortals may not share ?

But a bit of pearly shell,
Or of sea-weed green, may tell
Just a hint of secret lore
As we walk along the shore.

THE BALLOON BOY



THE BALLOON BOY

CARLO was the brown-skinned boy who stood on the corner of the Avenue every morning with a great bunch of red and blue balloons tied to a stick. Carlo used to wait smiling for the children to come up with their nurses and pick out the balloons with which they loved to play. The balloons bobbed and danced above Carlo's head as if they wanted to fly away. Indeed, one of them once succeeded in escaping, just after it had been bought by little Johnny Parker. Johnny had forgotten to hold it tight, and *Pouf!* Off it sailed over the trees. No one ever knew what became of

that little red balloon, which soared up far beyond the reach of Johnny's wailing. But the other little balloons were always trying to follow after, and sometimes they pulled so hard at the strings that they seemed almost ready to lift Carlo off his feet and bear him with them over the tree-tops.

Carlo was a happy boy, for he had come from a happy country where the people still believe in fairies, and he had not lived in this land long enough to catch the disease which makes one believe that there are "no such things as the Little People." Carlo was a kind boy, and he loved the little children who bought balloons of him and paid their pennies into his rough, brown hand. Carlo had a little sister at home in the old country, and when he had earned money enough by selling red and blue balloons he meant to send for Nita to come and live with him, so they could have a little home of their own.

One morning it rained hard, oh, very hard! Carlo did not go out to the Avenue, for he knew that the children would all stay indoors

that day, playing in their nurseries with their house toys. But in the afternoon, after dinner-time, the rain cleared away and the sun came out, hot and bright and beautiful, so that the sidewalks were soon as dry as dry. Then Carlo took his bunch of balloons and trudged to the corner, where he always stood. For he knew that all the nurses and all the babies, tired of being in the house, would soon be hurrying out for an airing in the Park. And of course they would need balloons.

Carlo took up his station as usual on the corner where the Avenue stops short before the high gates, and wishes it could go on into the Park. This was where the children looked to find him every day, and he had never yet disappointed them.

It was just the hour when the big boys are let out of school. Carlo had forgotten this. He did not like big boys. Suddenly — with a rush and a whoop — a crowd of them came tearing around the corner from the next street. They raced up and down the Avenue, shouting and laughing and full of mischief,

for they had been shut up all this rainy day and were glad to be out of doors once more. As they came running back down the Avenue, one of them spied Carlo standing on the corner.

“Hallo! Balloons!” shouted the boy, and immediately the noisy crowd rushed upon Carlo and surrounded him.

“Give me a red one!”

“Hi! Blue’s my color!”

“Pass me down a red one, quick, or I’ll cut the whole string!” But they offered him no money in exchange. Carlo held back, trying to defend his balloons from their snatching fingers. Then one boy cried, —

“Ho! Let’s cut the whole string, anyway, and see them go!” And quick as a flash, before Carlo had time to do anything, a sharp penknife had severed the string above the stick, and away went forty balloons, sailing over the trees merrily, glad to be free.

The boys gave a yell and danced up and down. But some one cried, “Look out! Here’s a policeman!” and off they scampered

in every direction, before Carlo fairly knew what they had done. Yes, there was a policeman, but he had not seen what had happened, and already he was turning the corner. Even if Carlo could catch up with him he could not speak enough English to tell the man his troubles. Besides, not even a policeman could bring back those flying balloons.

Poor Carlo! No customers for him this day. He looked down at the bare stick in his hand, and then up to where he could just see some tiny specks on the blue sky, far, far away. The balloons were seeking their little brother who escaped long before. Carlo's eyes filled with tears, for he was not a very big boy, and this was a dreadful thing which had happened to him. Already the procession of babies was coming down the Avenue, eager to buy Carlo's balloons. But he had nothing to sell them this afternoon.

Slowly and sadly he turned away and slunk down a side street toward another entrance to the Park. But the children wondered what had become of their balloon boy, who was al-

ways waiting for them on the corner, smiling pleasantly.

Carlo wandered into the Park and walked about the twisting paths, wondering what he should do. He had no money to buy more balloons. How could he start out afresh in business? He had sent his last earnings back across the water to the little sister in the land where they still believed in fairies, and she had saved almost enough to bring her here to him. But now, what was he to do now? How buy food and lodging, and especially how buy more balloons with which to pile up future pennies?

Carlo wandered about for a long time, thinking and puzzling, until the shadows began to lengthen, and it was almost night. Then he went to a little arbor in the Park, far from the place where the nurses and children mostly gathered. It was a spot that he loved, for it was full of grape-vines, which reminded him of the beautiful home from which he had come, — the country where the faries still lived. He was very tired and hungry, and he



THE LITTLE MAN

curled up on a settee in the arbor and went to sleep.

He must have slept a long time, for when he woke the Park was quite dark, save where the electric lights made queer patches of brightness among the leaves and on the grass and gravel walks. In the arbor itself hung a light which made the grape-vine with its half-ripened clusters look strange but very beautiful.

Carlo awoke with a start, for he had certainly felt something touch his knee. Yes! Carlo looked again, and rubbed his eyes. There at his knee stood a little man, — a little, thick man in a queer long gown, with a rope about his waist, — one of the very same Little Men of whom his mother had often told him in the land across the sea!

“What is the matter, Carlo?” asked the Little Man, in Carlo’s own home language. And Carlo answered in the same soft tongue:

“The boys have cut my balloons away, and I have nothing left with which to earn my living, that I may send money to Nita.”

“That is too bad!” exclaimed the Little Man. “What can we do about it?”

Carlo stared hard at him, for he had always wanted to see a Little Man. His hat was tall and had a broad brim, and on his feet were sandals. His brown gown clung tight about him, like the skin upon a russet apple, seeming ready to burst with the plumpness inside. His cheeks, too, seemed ready to burst with laughing, even when Carlo told him the story of the boys’ wicked deed.

“That is too bad!” he cried again, but not sadly. “What can we do about it?”

He glanced thoughtfully around the arbor in which they were sitting. It was a grape arbor, as I have said, and already the grapes were beginning to turn red and purple in the autumn coolness, though some were still green.

“The bad boys will steal them,” said the Little Man to himself, looking at the grapes. “They will not bring good to any one, only stomach-aches.” Carlo wondered what he could possibly mean. Still the Little Man stared around the arbor, nodding his head

slowly up and down, as if making up his mind about something very important. At last he turned to Carlo and asked suddenly, —

“Do you know where I came from?”

“No,” said Carlo. “I have been wondering. You do not seem to belong to this country at all.”

“I don’t,” said the Little Man. “They don’t even believe in me here, so they never, never see me — how could they? The babies who play over there,” — and he twisted his thumb toward the fountain and the sand-heap, — “even if they were to come in here now, could not see me. For their stupid nurses have told them that I don’t exist. Perhaps there might be one or two who still believe; and of them I should have to be very careful. For I don’t want to be discovered. But they do not often come here.”

“I come here often,” said Carlo.

“Of course,” chuckled the Little Man, “naturally!”

“But how happens it that you are here?” asked Carlo, eagerly.

“Why, I came with you, to be sure. I am the Little Man of your father’s house. And when you left the dear old country over the sea you brought me with you.” The Little Man sighed. Carlo sighed too. But quickly he remembered to be polite. “It was very good of you to come,” he said.

“Not at all,” answered the Little Man. “I had to follow. Some of them bring poison creatures in the fruit which they sell, — tarantulas and scorpions. Some of them bring measles, and the evil-eye, and other dreadful things. But you brought *me*, and I have been watching over you ever since. I am glad you come here every day, so I can live in this very nice place. Now I am going to help you.”

Carlo thanked him, but he seemed not to hear. Nimbly as a squirrel he was climbing up the vine which draped the arbor with its leaves and grapes. Presently down he came again, and in his hand he held a fine bunch of grapes, purple and red and green.

“It is not stealing,” he said, in a whisper,

“for this bunch has stopped ripening ; I can tell by signs which a fairy knows. It would soon wither, and would not even attract the bad boys. So I will use it for my purposes. Now, please give me your stick.”

Carlo handed him the shorn stick, wondering. With a few deft knots the Little Man tied the bunch of grapes to the handle, where the balloons used to bob.

“What !” he cried, nodding delightedly, “There you are ! Now of course you must go to sleep again. I cannot let you see how the last touches are done.” He tapped Carlo three times on the forehead. Immediately Carlo’s eyes began to close, his head nodded, and before he knew it he was lying on the bench in the arbor, snoring lustily and forgetting all his troubles.

Then the Little Man must have done something very strange and wonderful and marvelous ; though no one saw him, and so no one knows just what that something was. But when in the morning Carlo awoke with a start, a baby in a pink dress stood in the arbor hold-

ing out a little hand in which was a silver dime, and he was saying, —

“Please, Boy, give me a *green* balloon!”

Carlo jumped up and reached for the stick, which was propped between the bars of the seat beside him. And what do you think? The bunch of purple and red and green grapes seemed to have grown and grown, and swelled and swelled, until each grape had turned into a beautiful big balloon of the same color! And that is why on that particular day Carlo had some green balloons in his bunch, although the children had never seen any like them before. And he sold one to the pink baby, and others to the other babies who came crowding around when he went out upon the Avenue, until the green balloons were all gone. For of course the babies wanted the unusual kind first. But after that he sold off the ordinary blue and red ones, and went home with his pockets full of dimes, and with nothing more on the end of his stick than when the bad boys let loose his bunch of balloons. But now there were no tears in his eyes — no, indeed!

Now I do not know just what happened next. But Carlo always looks smiling and happy about something. The children buy his balloons every day, and every night he carries home a pocketful of silver. Carlo is growing rich. And now little Nita has come across the sea to be with him. When the cold weather comes I daresay the Little Man will go to live in their house, as he did in their old home in the land where people still believe in fairies. But you may be sure that as long as he can he will stay in the pretty grape-vine arbor. If you are one of the wise children who believe in him, perhaps you will see him there yourself, some day. At any rate, whether you believe in the Little Man or not, if you go at the right time you will be sure to see the Balloon Boy, sitting on the bench and smiling happily at something, with the bunch of red and blue balloons bobbing over his head. And if you pay ten cents you may have a balloon all for your own, which will tug and tug and will try to get away, just as little Johnny Parker's did.

BALLOONS

Where do they go,
I want to know,
The little balloons which fly, and fly,
Over the trees and up so high
Into the sky?

Do they sail as far as Heaven's gate,
Where chubby cherubs watch and wait,
Who stretch out their hands with an eager cry
As the little balloons come floating by?

Do the cherubs play with the pretty things,
Flitting about on their baby wings,
While the little balloons bob to and fro,
Just as they did in the world below?

They never come back the tale to tell,
So no one knows what each befell.
But if they can stay
In that Land for aye,
Where the sun ever shines and the sky is blue,
I do not blame them for longing to fly
Over the trees and up so high;
And when mine goes I will not boo-hoo, —
Will you?

THE GREEN CAP



THE GREEN CAP

ONCE upon a time in the far East, where people live upon rice and tea, a little old woman dwelt all alone in a tiny hut on the edge of the forest. The little old woman was very, very poor ; but she was a brave soul, and so long as there was a little tea in her little teapot, a little rice in her little rice bucket, and a little water in her well she would smile a little smile and say, “ Oh, I have enough, and that is all which any one needs in this world. I am doing very well indeed.”

But there came an evil time for the poor little old woman. There was a drought in the

land, and all the wells ran dry. There was a famine, and no more rice nor tea were to be had for love or money. One night the little old woman went about to get her evening meal and she was very, very hungry. First she went to draw a dipper of water from the well. But when she peered down into the well she saw that it was almost dry.

“Alack!” she cried, “when I have used this last dipper of water there will be none left for to-morrow. After that I must go dry. And how long can I live so?”

Slowly and sadly she went back to the house and took her little rice bucket down from the shelf on the wall. But when she opened it she saw only a few grains of rice scantily covering the bottom of the bucket.

“Alack!” she cried, “when I have taken out the handful for my supper there will be no more left for to-morrow. After that I must go hungry. And how long can I live so?”

She shook her head mournfully and went to her little teapot, which hung before the fire. But when she took off the cover thereof she

cried again, "Alack and alas ! Now even my tea is gone, and whatever shall I do ? There is but a drop in the pot, and when I have eaten my supper there will be none left for the morrow. After that I must go thirsty. But so I cannot live. Day after to-morrow I shall die !" And the poor little old woman shed a tear which almost fell into the teapot to salt the last drop of tea which remained there.

Now she sat down to her scanty supper and hesitated to take the first mouthful, for it would so soon be gone. She gave a sigh and a groan as she lifted the little teapot to pour out the last drop of tea, for the little old woman loved her tea best of all.

Just at that moment there came a knock on the door, a low-down knock such as a very little child might reach to give.

"Tap — tap !"

"Come in !" said the little old woman, and she set down the teapot carefully.

The latch clicked, the door opened, and in came a queer little creature the size of a child and walking upright upon two legs ; but it

was not a child. It was a funny little monkey, with a wee black face and a curled-up handy tail, and on its head it wore a tiny green cap.

“Ugh!” cried the little old woman, who did not like monkeys, “Ugh, go away!”

But the monkey skipped briskly across the floor to the fireplace, and stood there shivering and holding out its small hands to the blaze quite as a little child might have done. The old woman stared at it in surprise. “Bless my stars, how ugly it is!” she said. “But the poor thing seems cold. Let it stay and warm itself if it wishes.”

At these words the monkey turned about and made a low courtesy to the little old woman.

“Bless my stars!” said she again, for she had never seen so remarkable an animal, even in the land where monkeys were common.

Now the monkey had ceased to shiver, and it came skipping up to the table where the old woman sat, ready to eat her supper.

“Ugh! Go away!” cried the little old woman. “Go away, you ugly creature!”

But the monkey rested its chin upon the board and looked wistfully at the supper. "May I not share with you?" it seemed to say, though it spoke no word, and it put its little hands out towards the old woman, beggar-fashion.

"Bless my stars!" cried the old woman again, "it has the way of a child. But what an ugly child! Ugh! I cannot bear to have it near me. Yet—it is hard even for a monkey to be hungry." She looked at her scanty dipper of water, at her little dish of rice, at her teapot with its drop of tea.

"I have but one dipper of water left, one handful of rice, one drop of tea," she said ruefully. "When these are gone I know not whence to-morrow's food will come; yet, little creature with the hands of a child, you shall share with me so long as I have a morsel. I cannot refuse those hands. But do not come too near, for I love not monkeys."

Now the monkey seemed to understand every word the old woman spoke, although it could not answer in words. It bowed grate-

fully over its clasped hands as the old woman helped it to half the scanty meal, — half the dipper of water, half the rice, half a drop squeezed from the little teapot. The monkey ate hungrily, and when it had finished patted its little stomach and grinned happily at the old woman as if to say, “That was very good!”

“I am glad you are satisfied,” said the old woman with a sigh; “and now will you be gone? There is nothing more in the house for guest or for host.”

But the monkey laid its head to one side upon its little hands and closed its eyes, showing that it was fain of sleep. Then again it held out its hands, beseeching the old woman.

“Oho!” said she, “you want to sleep here, too? Well-a-day! That ever I should have an ugly monkey napping in my hut! But I cannot turn a poor creature out into the cold night. You may stay, but keep as far from me as maybe, at the other corner of the cottage. Come, now, let us sleep and try to forget that to-morrow must be a hungry day.”

So they slept, the old woman on her hard

little cot and the monkey curled up on the floor, which was no whit harder. And the old woman dreamed wonderful and beautiful dreams.

When it was light she opened her eyes, and at first she thought she must still be dreaming, for she had forgotten the happenings of the last night. There was the monkey with its little green cap on one side frisking about the cottage, sweeping the hearth, tidying the corners and setting things to rights.

“Bless my stars!” cried the little old woman. At these words the monkey turned, and with a grin beckoned towards the table, where dishes were already set out as if for a meal. Then the old woman remembered what had happened the evening before. But she remembered also the empty cupboard, and sighed wearily.

“Breakfast!” she grumbled; “it is little breakfast we shall have this day. Did we not share yestereven the last dipper of water, the last handful of rice, the last drop of tea? There will scarcely be any breakfast for me

this day, and you, who are strong and frisky, had best seek one elsewhere, leaving me to die."

But the monkey shook its head, grinning knowingly, and still beckoned to the table. It lifted the dipper and showed how it was still full of water. It lifted the cover from the rice dish, and lo ! there was a mess of steaming white rice. It shook the little teapot, and a drop trickled from the spout.

"Bless my stars !" cried the little old woman, "last night my eyes must have cheated me. I certainly thought there was not another mouthful in the hut. Well, here is indeed a goodly meal," and she sat down to the table. The monkey looked on wistfully, but did not venture near. Presently the old woman looked up.

"What !" she cried, "shall you not share, little guest, you who so cleverly prepared my breakfast ? Did I not say that you should share so long as I had a morsel upon the board ? Come, then, and eat."

The monkey grinned happily and drew to

the table. The scanty meal was sufficient for them both. When they had finished, the old woman nodded her head at the monkey and said, —

“Even a morsel tastes better when one shares it with company. But little I thought that a monkey would prove so pleasant a guest.”

At these words the monkey squirmed with happiness and frisked about the cottage like a mad thing. After that it went on with the household duties, quite like a handy little maid. But when it had finished these it skipped out of the door and disappeared into the forest.

“Now it is gone forever,” said the old woman with a little sigh, “and I shall be left alone to die of hunger and cold. For even my store of firewood is gone, and I have not strength to go to the forest for more.” And she sat down and cried bitterly, for the poor old woman’s courage was quite gone.

The daylight dimmed and the night came on, and the old woman sat rocking herself to and fro, trying to forget how hungry she was.

But presently the door burst open and in came the monkey, staggering with arms full of fagots for the fire. It made a bright blaze on the hearth and then came timidly up to the old woman and laid a hand upon her knee. This time the old woman did not shrink or cry out, "Ugh! Go away!" for she seemed no longer to hate monkeys as once she had done. She looked up with half a smile and said:

"Ah, you have come back, little guest! I thought you had deserted me. I know you think it is supper time; but nay, there will be no supper to-night. There is naught in the house for us to eat, or I would gladly share it with so willing a helper."

But the monkey shook its head and drew the old woman gently by the skirts towards the door.

"There is no use in going to the well," said the old woman; "it is quite dry." But the monkey continued to pull her dress, and at last the old woman rose, shaking her head because she knew that the quest was useless. The two went out to the well, and the monkey let down

the bucket. When it came up the old woman thrust in the dipper, and lo ! she brought it out full once more with clear, cool, sparkling water.

“Bless my stars !” she cried in astonishment, “there is witchcraft here,” and she looked at the monkey suspiciously. But the little creature only grinned.

Once more it pulled at her skirts, as though it would lead her back to the house. Wondering, the old woman followed, dipper in hand. The monkey led her straight to where the rice bucket stood on the shelf. The old woman shook her head hopelessly as she took down the bucket, because she knew that it was as empty as a last year’s bird’s nest. But when she drew off the cover she nearly dropped it with surprise. There was still a handful of rice in the bottom of the bucket.

“Bless my stars !” cried the old woman, and she looked again at the monkey. But the monkey only grinned and pointed towards the teapot.

“That at least I know to be empty,” said

the old woman positively, "for I squeezed out the last drop with my own hand." But what was her amazement when she tilted the spout and out came an amber drop of comfort.

"Bless my stars!" again cried the old woman. "Here is really enough for another meal. Witchcraft or no, you have certainly brought me good luck, little guest, and though we may die of hunger to-morrow we should greatly rejoice now, for we thought to be dead, even this same day."

So that night passed, and another and still others. Every morning, as at first, the monkey prepared breakfast for the little old woman ere she was awake. And still there remained a dipperful of water in the well, a handful of rice in the bucket, and a drop of tea in the teapot. Every night the old woman found the same for their supper.

She was growing very fond of this queer little creature who helped her so heartily, and she wondered how she could ever have disliked monkey-folk. She even forgot that she had once thought her guest ugly, for the small face



THE OLD WOMAN IS SURPRISED

seemed, indeed, to have changed and to have become more human. The old woman had made for the monkey a pretty dress of green to match the green cap which her guest ever wore upon its head. The long tail which once she had used as an extra strong hand had shrunk away and disappeared beneath the pretty dress; perhaps it was gone altogether — for the monkey was certainly changing in many ways, though the poor old woman was too weak-eyed to see how greatly this was so.

Now the weeks passed, and the months passed, and it was exactly a year and a day from the time when the monkey had first appeared. On that morning the old woman woke up and saw as usual the little green figure flitting about the cottage, making things neat and tidy, and preparing the tiny breakfast which was always the same, — scanty and simple, but sufficient for the two, with kindness and good feeling to eke it out. This morning, when the old woman was ready to get up, the busy little creature came skipping up to the cot. And as it stood looking

down, smiling kindly, the old woman suddenly blinked and rubbed her eyes.

"Bless my stars!" she cried. "How big you are! How pretty you have grown! What! Who is this? You are not my little monkey, you are a lovely girl smiling at me."

"Good morning, Mother," said a sweet voice. "I am your little guest. I am the same poor creature whom you took in out of kindness, and whom you have allowed to dwell with you this long year, sharing your scanty store. I owe you more than words can say."

"Words!" cried the old woman, "and how long since a monkey could use words?" She sat staring blankly.

"You see I am really the same," said the pretty girl. "I still wear the green dress which you made for me and the green cap which I had upon my head when I came to you. In that green cap lies my secret. I am a Fairy, Mother."

Then she told the old woman a strange story, — how because she was naughty the Fairy Queen had punished her by giving her

that ugly monkey-shape, which she must wear for a year and a day. But at the end of that time she could take her own shape and go back to Fairyland. And now the time had come.

“But you have been so kind to me, dear Mother, that I may give you one wish before I go back to my beautiful home,” said the Fairy maiden.

Then the old woman burst into tears and flung her arms around the neck of her little guest. “Oh, do not leave me, kind Fairy child!” she said. “I love you very dearly, and how shall I live without you? I loved you when I thought you were only a little monkey, but now I love you a thousand times more.”

Gently the Fairy kissed her and said, “Now hear what the gift is that I may give you. I may give you one wish of three, and you shall choose between them. You shared your simple food with a poor little animal-guest. Now for the first wish: Would you live always on princely fare? If you so choose you may have more than you need to eat. You may have meats

and fruit, fine wheaten bread and choice sweets, such as are set upon palace tables. You may have everything that a dainty palate could desire, and every day a different feast of goodies. This you may choose, if you so will. Or, if you think the second choice a better one, you may become young again as I am now, for I am a picture of your lost youth which you have forgotten. You may have health and strength, and appetite to enjoy life, and the hearty meals which you will be able to earn. That is a goodly gift, is it not?"

The old woman nodded, but still her eyes were unsatisfied.

"Then there is the third choice," said the Fairy, and her voice was very soft. "But that one it seems selfish for me to name, because it is a wish for my happiness."

"What is the third wish?" asked the old woman eagerly.

"You may wish, if you choose — and the wish will be granted by the Fairy Queen — that all may remain as it now is; you will be what you are, a dear old woman living still in

this little hut, with your little well in which there will ever be one dipperful of water, no more ; with your little bucket in which there will ever be one handful of rice, no more ; with your little teapot in which there will ever be one drop of tea, no more. It is scanty fare for one, Mother ; yet withal, if you would have one to share it, I will do so still, as I have done so long. I will become your child — no longer a Fairy-child, but your little human girl-child, such as I seem now. I will live with you always, love you and take care of you always and share your scanty portion.”

The old woman gave a cry of joy. “But do *you* wish it?” she said. “Would you not rather go back to your beautiful Fairyland, where you can be happy and care-free always?”

“Nay, dear Mother,” said the Fairy ; “if the choice were mine I would rather remain here with you than anywhere in the whole wide world, for I have been very happy here and I have learned many things. I do not want to go back to Fairyland to be an idle,

careless, selfish Fairy. I would rather be a human child and share my mother's joys and sorrows. Dear Mother, will you have it so?"

"Yes, I will have it so!" cried the old woman joyfully.

"Think," said the Fairy, lifting a warning finger, "think of the fine feasts and the dainties you might have. Think of the youth and strength. Would you give up all this for only me — who must share half the refreshment from your well, your bucket, and your teapot?"

"That is enough," said the old woman. "What do we need more? We can still offer a sup to any poor stranger who may come as you came to my door. Oh, dear child, if you will stay with me, that is all I ask!"

"Well, then, let us sit down and have breakfast," said the dear little girl, tossing her green cap into the fire. "Now I am a Fairy no longer, but your very own little girl-child. And here is a dipper of water — the only one left in the well. Here is a dish

of rice — I used the last handful from the bucket. Here is just a tiny drop of tea in the teapot. Oh, Mother, I am so glad ! ”

So they sat down to their frugal meal, and they laughed, and they laughed, and they laughed, they were so happy.

CHILD OR FAIRY

'T is good to be a Fairy-thing,
And flit about on gauzy wing;
To sleep in cradles made of flowers,
Or play through all the joyous hours.
For Fairies have no grief nor care,
Happy they are, and always fair, —
I suppose.

And yet 't is better far to be
A little human child like me,
With lessons hard and tasks to do,
And sometimes little troubles, too.
For I have Mother's tender kiss,
And nothing is so good as this, —
Every one knows !

KARL AND THE DRYAD



KARL AND THE DRYAD

THERE was once a lad named Karl who lived with his father and mother in a little village of the Flat Land. Karl was a big fellow, tall and yellow-haired. But all his strength was in his long, lean body. There was none in his poor head. Karl was the village simpleton.

Poor Karl! His life was a sorry one. He was despised and jeered at by the whole village. The children followed and tormented him at every chance, because he could not learn at school; the grown folk were little kinder, but nudged one another and made

jokes about him when he came to the market-place. Even the cur-dogs followed and barked at him, but they knew no better. They were cruel folk, those dwellers in the Flat Land.

Karl's own parents were the unkindest of all. They did not love their son nor pity his wretchedness, but were ashamed because he was so simple. They were angry, too, because in their poverty he could not help them earn a living. For there seemed little indeed that poor Karl could learn to do, — he was so very simple. His parents were continually telling him how useless he was in this workaday world.

“Oh, you stupid fellow!” they would sometimes say, driving him out of the house with blows of broom or stick. “Oh, you great good-for-nothing, sitting here and eating our bread without doing aught to pay for it! Were ever parents troubled with so worthless a son? Other folk have bright boys and girls who will grow up to do some good in the world and be a credit to their parents. But you will always be a big, overgrown baby for

us to take care of. Bah ! Karl, we are tired of seeing you about ! ”

With the tears streaming down his face poor Karl would shuffle out of the mean little cottage where they lived, the most unhappy boy in the whole wide world. There was one place whither Karl loved to go at such times, the only place where he was sure of finding rest and quiet and a friend. In a corner of the village was a little wood, — a rare sight in the Flat Land, where trees grew but sparsely.

Few other persons came here, for the folk of the country cared little about rest or quiet, and nothing at all for the beauty of nature. They were quite satisfied with the look of their clean-shaven country, their smooth lawns and geometrical canals, their straight, shadeless roads, curbed neatly on either hand. It had never occurred to them to plant trees for beauty and shade, and for the other good things which trees offer. The little wood had grown quite by accident, and no one cared anything about it. But Karl loved the lonely, pretty place, and especially the great oak

which grew in the midst thereof, the only oak in the whole Flat Land. It was so big, so sturdy, and yet withal so gentle when it stretched its great limbs protectingly over his wretchedness, giving the comfort of its shade and coolness to refresh him in his troubles. It was Karl's only friend.

A hot, sultry day came upon the Flat Land, and it seemed to be Karl's evil day. In the morning a rout of children and dogs chased him through the village, pelting him with bad eggs and fruit, and with stones, too. They chased him until the school bell rang, when he escaped; for Karl did not go to school, — he was too simple. When he returned home, breathless, bruised, and weary, scarcely able to speak from fright and exhaustion, his father beat him because he could not tell where he had been all the morning. Poor Karl! There was no part of the whole town where he had not been in that dreadful chase. But he had not the words to explain this to his parents; so his cruel father punished him, and his mother drove him out without his dinner.

More wretched than ever before, Karl fled to his refuge, the little wood, and flung himself on the greensward beneath the giant oak tree. He buried his face in the cool, soft moss, and cried as though his heart would break.

“Poor fool! Poor fool!” he wailed. “Poor Karl, good for nothing!”

While he lay thus, sobbing aloud and filling the cups of the moss with his tears, he heard a heavy tread approaching. Glancing up fearfully, — for he had no hope to meet a friendly face, since none in all the world had ever smiled upon him, — he saw a Farmer approaching with a great axe over his shoulder.

“Hullo, there!” cried the Farmer when he spied Karl under the tree. “You Simpleton, better get up. I am going to cut down that tree which grows over your head.”

“Cut down my tree!” gasped Karl, and he began to tremble. Was he to lose his only friend?

“*Your* tree!” jeered the Farmer. “Poor Fool, I never knew that you owned anything, even your senses. The tree is mine, with the

land on which it grows and acres on every hand. I am going to cut down the tree to make firewood for next winter. That is all trees are good for."

"Oh, do not do that!" begged Karl, spreading out his arms as if to protect the tree. "I will not let you cut it down!"

"Ho ho!" laughed the Farmer. "How will you prevent it, Simpleton? And what is the tree to you, anyway?"

"The only big tree there is anywhere!" sobbed Karl. "The only shade; the only safe, quiet, cool, kind place in the whole world! O Man, do not cut down the tree! You cannot make another."

The Farmer had lifted his axe to strike, but now he paused and rested it on the ground. Karl's last words had struck him with a new thought. "The Fool speaks a word of wisdom," he growled to himself. "It is easier to cut down a tree like this than to make another. The acorn which I might plant to-day would become no such tree in my lifetime — nor in that of my son, or my grandson, or my great-



KARL AND THE DRYAD

grandson, for that matter. Fool, I will think it over (the more fool I, 't is likely). I will spare *your* tree—ha ha!—for a time. I can cut it down whenever I like. But as you say, I cannot soon grow another. My folly bids yours good-day, Fool.”

Shouldering his axe, the Farmer trudged half sulkily away. Then Karl fell to sobbing again, but this time with joy that his tree was spared. He flung his arm around the great trunk and pressed his lips against the rough bark, kissing it again and again. Suddenly he heard a sharp crack in the oak; another and another, as if the bark were being ripped away. He started up in a fright and stood back from the tree, wondering what was happening to his old friend.

Presently a long vertical slit appeared in the side of the tree and grew gradually wider and wider. A door was opening in the trunk! Karl stood gazing spell-bound at this amazing sight, when out from the dark entrance stepped a figure most wonderful to see. It was a lovely maiden, dressed all in brown, —

the color of the tree-bark. About her head was twined a wreath of green oak leaves and acorns, and in her hand she carried a wand, made from a branch of the tree. She was a Dryad, the spirit whose home was the old oak tree; but Karl was too simple to know that. He merely stood staring at the beautiful stranger, too much surprised even to close his poor foolish mouth, which hung wide open.

The Dryad smiled sweetly at the lad and said, "Thanks, kind friend, for saving my tree. I heard your wise words to the cruel Farmer, and brave you were to speak them. Now what can I do to make you happy, as we Dryads love to make happy him who does kindness to our sheltering trees?"

Poor Karl did not understand how he had saved the tree. He only knew that for some reason the cruel Farmer had changed his mind. As little did he understand why the Dryad thanked him. But he heard the kindness of her voice, and knew she offered aid.

"Oh, can you help me, beautiful Stranger?"

he cried, clasping his hands eagerly and looking at her with tears in his eyes.

“Indeed, I will help you all I can, kind lad,” said the Dryad, waving her wand and taking a step towards him. “Tell me about your trouble.”

Then Karl told the Dryad all the sorrow of his life, — how he was foolish and of no use, a burden to his parents and a disgrace to the town ; how all the village, even the little children and the cur-dogs, hated and despised him ; how unhappy and lonesome he was.

“O fair Stranger,” said Karl as he finished the sad little tale, “I am only a poor simpleton, and I can never do anything good or great. But if you could only teach me how to do some little thing that will be of use to the world, so that I shall not always be hated and despised even by the little children and dogs of the village, I should be so very happy ! Will you do this, dear Tree-Maiden ? ”

The Dryad looked at him pityingly, and the tears stood in her own brown eyes when she heard his wish. “Poor boy,” she said, and

her voice was very sweet, "you ask nothing for yourself, neither riches nor happiness nor even wisdom. You ask only to be taught how your simplicity may be of some use to the world which has treated you so unkindly. Some would call it a foolish wish. But I say, O Karl, that it is not foolishness. Twice to-day you have spoken wisely, lad."

The Dryad looked up into the tree under which they stood ; she looked down upon the ground ; then she glanced around and about, thinking hard for Karl's sake. And at last she spoke again.

"Remember the words which you spoke to-day when the Farmer raised his axe. You told him that he could not make another such tree ; and those words saved this great oak. You were right, Karl. And he was right when he agreed that the acorn which he might plant to-day would not become like this king of trees in his lifetime, nor in that of his son, or his grandson, or his great-grandson. Yet the acorn which you plant will grow, and its shade, its beauty, its greenness will one day equal

this. Though you may never see it, the world will be better for your deed, and future generations will bless you for it. This shall be your task, Karl, to fare forth upon a lifelong pilgrimage and plant as you go the blessed trees which will shelter the many people who are to come after you. Thus the Flat Land will become famous for all time as the place of happy wayfaring."

Now poor Karl understood not one word of all this which the Dryad had so prettily spoken, save that he was to go away. But this thought he seized eagerly.

"I am to go away!" he cried. "When, dear Maiden, and where?"

"You must go to-night," answered the Dryad, waving her wand. "See, already the shadows are falling. You must not be missed nor sought for this night. You must take with you only this, — a sack of acorns upon your shoulders. See where they lie all about us under the tree, ready for you to gather! And look! I will take this green mantle which I wear and make of it a sack to hold your bur-

den. Take it, Karl, and fill it thus with the gift of your old friend, the oak."

Karl did as she showed him, and presently he had the long, soft sack filled with brown acorns. Then the Dryad gave him a lesson in planting. She showed him how to dig a little hole for each acorn and cover it with mould ; and though Karl was so simple he learned the lesson readily, for he had a loving teacher. Then the Dryad told him how he must walk a hundred paces from the planting of one acorn before he turned earth to cover the next.

"Now, Karl, you shall go forth," she said, "from village to village wherever your thought may lead, — for it does not matter, — planting acorns on either side of the way. And if any one asks you why you do this, do you tell him the story of this day ; and I warrant you will need no other pence to pay for food or a bed whenever you need them. Do not forget this story, Karl. Do not forget."

"I am a simpleton," said Karl humbly, "yet I shall never forget this day's happenings, nor your words to me. But shall I in-

deed be doing something for the world's good? I do not see how that can be."

"Trust me, Karl," said the Dryad kindly. "Indeed and indeed, you will be doing much, I promise you, — more than many men who call themselves wise. But see, already the night is falling. It is time that you were starting upon your journey."

Thereupon she helped him to place the stout sack of acorns upon his shoulders, and with a wave of the wand started him forth upon his pilgrimage. Smiling with joy to think that at last he was about to be of some use in the world, Karl bent his long frame under the heavy burden, and trudged out of the little wood. When he reached the highroad, he turned to wave a last farewell to the Dryad. But already she had retreated into her tree-cell, closing the door behind her so tightly that one would never know where it opened. It was to his friend the great oak, alone, that Karl bade his last good-by.

Thus Karl began his pilgrimage with the green sack of acorns on his back, and with

neither penny nor crust in his pocket. He began his pilgrimage at dusk, when every one was indoors at the evening meal; so no one thought of him, or spied his doings. With great glee the simple fellow planted his first acorn in the heart of the village, just within sight of the parent oak. So long as light lasted he trudged on with a happier heart than he had ever known. He was being of some use to the world! He did not understand how, but he believed the gentle Dryad's promise. At every hundred paces he planted an acorn, and he was so busy counting his steps between whiles that he forgot all his troubles. And this, too, the wise Dryad had foreseen.

At last, when the way had grown so dim that Karl could barely see to dig earth for the last planting, a wayfarer accosted him.

"What ho, Stranger! What are you doing there?" cried this man.

"I am planting an acorn," said Karl simply.

"Ho ho! what an idea!" cried the fellow with a guffaw. "You'll never live to enjoy the oak that grows from that acorn. Why do

you take so much trouble for nothing, my funny fellow?"

Then Karl told him the whole story, as the Dryad had bade him do. And when he paused at the end, the man was silent for a little time.

"Poor fellow!" he said at last. "Simple, simple! What a story made of fool's fancies! An oak tree — a maiden coming out of it — acorns to be planted along the road for shade and rest! Yet — there is something in that last thought. It might not be a bad thing to have trees along our highways, though I never before heard of such a thing. Whew! I know I should have been glad to-day for the shade of a tree when I ate my luncheon in the burning sun. — Have you supped? Where do you lodge to-night, lad?"

Karl dropped his foolish mouth and said blankly that he did not know. In truth, he had never thought of the matter until that minute. But the stranger clapped him on the shoulder and said, —

"Come home with me and I will give you

a bed and a sup. Your wonderful story deserves so much reward."

So Karl fared well that night, and on the morrow once more started happily forth upon his mission. Thus indeed he fared wherever he went. At first folk laughed at the story which he told. But when they came to think it over, they found it not so ridiculous. Looking at the poor fool's eager face and watching his tireless labor for the good of people whom he would never see, their hearts smote them for their own selfishness, and they were ashamed. They treated him well. Karl never lacked for a meal or a bed; the telling of his story always earned either. Yet he never expected this reward, but was continually wondering why folk were so good to him. He thanked them humbly for their charity, and when he was refreshed, went forth again upon his pilgrimage with no care for the morrow or for the next meal. Karl was indeed a simpleton.

The days and the weeks and the years went by, and Karl still wandered, planting the

acorns as he went. He never retraced his steps, but went on and on, down new roads, new avenues, new boulevards, into new countries. He never was curious to see how his work was faring. He was too simple to think of that. He had been told what he must do in order to be useful in the world; that was enough. The Power that watches over little acorns and great oaks, over simpletons and wise men, would take care of the work which Karl had begun.

Mile after mile he traversed, country after country he visited; the years passed over his head, silvering his hair and bending still more his tall frame. As Karl grew older the burden on his shoulders became lighter to carry; but very gradually. The sack made from the Dryad's mantle must have had magic woven in its tissue. For that first stock of acorns from the old oak tree lasted throughout the entire pilgrimage, during the whole of Karl's life, so that he had no need to return to the unfriendly village for a fresh supply. On and on he went, and behind him for miles and

miles through the countries and the years stretched rows of little oak saplings, of various heights and sizes, and full of promise, — the beginning of a wonderful arched avenue. For after he had passed out of sight, the people of every village, remembering his strange words and his wild story, began to think of him as a holy man, and to look upon the acorns which he had planted as holy things. So the sprouts were cherished carefully and more carefully as the years went by.

Now at last, after many years, Karl was grown old and feeble, and the acorns were few in the bottom of the Dryad's green sack ; and he knew that his pilgrimage was almost over. He was many, many miles from home, and for the first time he thought of returning, longing for the Tree, his friend. He was now bowed and white-haired. A snowy beard descended to his waist ; his garments were in rags and his shoes were mere strips of leather bound around his bare feet. But he was very happy, for he knew his work was done.

In a little village of the far South country

he planted the last acorn, and sank upon the spot, unable to go any farther. The townsfolk gathered around him, saying, "Who is this? What holy man is this?" For his face was indeed that of a blessed saint. Then once more, for the last time, he told his story. He told it in a faint and faltering voice, and it was so sad, so sweet, that every one wept to hear it, and marveled greatly, saying, —

"Surely, he is indeed a holy man! See, the green wonder-sack is empty. This is the end of his pilgrimage. Our village is blest and shall be famous as the end of his pilgrimage. We will set up a shrine in his honor where the last acorn is planted. But first we must take him home."

"Yes, take me home!" said Karl, who understood only this word of all the praise they gave him.

They laid him on the green mantle and started gently to carry him where he would be. He could not tell them the name of the place, but they traced the way by the acorns which he had planted and which had sprung

up in his honor. As they went from village to village, folk came out who remembered the holy pilgrim who had passed erewhile, telling his quaint story; and they claimed a share in bearing the blessed burden. So that poor Karl had a continually growing company of people ministering to his wants and doing him the kindnesses of love. But he did not know why, thinking only that the world was grown wondrously kind since the days of his boyhood. As they passed on, the wonder grew at the length of his pilgrimage and the extent of Karl's work. For the journey was not a matter of days but of months, even at the steady pace they held. And as they measured back mile after mile, the planting of Karl became still more wonderful to see. From little sprouts the acorns had now grown tiny tree-lets. Further on the saplings were waist-high, shoulder high, above the heads of the tallest. In lands where he had passed years before grew rows of tall, beautiful oaks on either side of the road. But it was when the goodly company entered at last the Flat Land itself that

they saw the trees become so sturdy and so broad that already it was a fair avenue down which Karl was borne. It was many, many years since he had passed that way. He himself was forgotten, but there remained the tradition of a simple lad who had once gone by, planting the blessed oaks which were now the pride of the land. And his own countrymen joined the company in greater numbers than any heretofore. For now the wisdom of the planting began to be seen. The trees were so tall and so broad-limbed that already they cast a grateful shade, under which the pilgrims rested at every stage. Men, women, and children, even the animals whom they passed, taking shelter from the summer heat under these same trees, blessed the wisdom which had done this thing. But Karl knew nothing of all this. He only knew that he was going home; and he slept, being very weary.

At last they came to the village where Karl was born; but he did not know it for such, he was so simple. Nor did the people who flocked

to praise him remember Karl, he was so changed. They only knew him for the unnamed benefactor and friend who had made their town the fairest and most famous in the whole land. Among them were the very children, now grown old like him, who had teased and tormented him that woeful day. But now they crowded around the green litter as it was borne along, seeking to kiss the hand of the wise man who had given them shade and shelter on their weary way to and from the market. The company of pilgrims bore Karl past and under the trees which had sprung up to mark his passing from the town. They came to the last tree, the first which Karl had planted in the heart of the village on that first day, and here they paused, troubled. For they said,—

“The avenue ends here. Whither shall we now carry the holy man, and what would he have us do? For he has spoken no word since we began the journey.”

But under this last tree Karl opened his eyes, and raising himself on his litter stretched out his arms to the East. Gazing whither he

pointed, the company saw a little wood, and rising out of it a single giant oak, greater than all the others which Karl had planted,—greater than any which those men had seen.

“There, there!” cried Karl, with joy in his voice. “Take me there! Home, home!”

Wondering, they bore him to the great oak and laid him on the greensward beneath the tree. Then a marvelous thing happened. In the sight of all the people a little door opened in the side of the oak, and out stepped a maiden dressed all in brown, with a girdle of green and with a crown of oak-leaves on her head. She bore a branch of the tree in her hand, which she waved gently as she stepped towards Karl.

“Welcome home!” she cried sweetly, smiling upon him. “Welcome home, dear friend. You have had your task and it is ended. Your wish is fulfilled. You have been of great use to the world, and it will bless your name more and more as the years go by. Come, now, and rest.” Tenderly she took him by the hand, aiding him to rise. He lifted himself, feebly

at first, but seeming to gain strength from her touch. The Dryad wrapped her green mantle around his shoulders, leading him towards the oak. And lo ! When they reached the little door, he turned and smiled at the company, waving his hand in a last farewell, but speaking no word. And they looked at him amazed, such a change seemed to have passed over him ; but they could not say how, save that the weight of years, the weariness, the sorrow, the yearning, seemed to have slipped away. He smiled at them, and it was not the smile of a simpleton, but of one who knew the meaning of strange things. Then the Dryad drew him gently after her and they passed in through the little door, into the heart of the great oak tree. Noiselessly it closed behind them, leaving not a crack to show where it had been. And this was the last ever seen of Karl and the Dryad.

But the people were left staring at one another, as folk do when they have seen something that they cannot understand.

TREES

However little I may be,
At least I too can plant a tree.

And some day it will grow so high
That it can whisper to the sky,

And spread its leafy branches wide
To make a shade on every side.

Then on a sultry summer day,
The people resting there will say, —

“ Oh, good and wise and great was he
Who thought to plant this blessed tree ! ”

THE INDIAN FAIRY



THE INDIAN FAIRY

I

“KATIE has been complaining again of the queer noises in the cellar,” said Rob’s mother, as she passed the coffee cup to her husband across the breakfast table.

“It must be rats,” said Rob’s papa. “We will get a trap.”

“It is very strange,” said Mamma again, “the girls declare that the noises seem to come from the old well. That is what all our servants have said for years. You know some of them have been so frightened that they gave

us notice, because of the noises in the well. They think it is bewitched."

"What is 'bewitched,' Mamma?" asked Rob.

"Pooh, pooh!" said Rob's papa. "It is only rats, I know, and the noises do not come from the well, but from the wall. There must be a rat's nest in the wall close by the well. I have heard about those noises ever since I was a little boy. Sometimes I used to think that I heard them myself, and I fancied all sorts of queer things. But of course it was nothing but rats."

Rob had been listening with round eyes, and now he cried eagerly, "O Papa! I did not know that there was a well under the house. How did it come there, and what is it for?"

"Oh, yes, there is an old well," said his papa. "It has been down there longer than I can remember, for it is even older than the house, — older than the city, too, I daresay. It was an Indian spring, and my great-grandfather built the house over it, so as to have fresh water

always conveniently at hand. It is covered now with a trapdoor, so that no one can fall in by mistake. That is why you never saw it, Rob."

"An old Indian spring!" cried Rob excitedly, "and we drink that very same water every day! How splendid!" He sipped some water from his glass and smacked his lips.

"Oh, no," said his papa laughing. "This is ordinary spring water bought at the store. Our old well has not been used for years and years. Since the city has been built up so closely around our house, which was one of the first ones here on the Hill, we have not dared to use the well water, because it might not be clean. I dare say the well is quite dry by this time. I have not looked into it for years."

"O Papa! I want to look down into the well!" cried Rob.

"Well, you shall do so some time," said his papa as they rose from the table. "But I am in a hurry now. Good-by, Mamma. Good-by, Rob. I will buy a trap on my way down town to-day, and we will put an end to the noises in the cellar which trouble Katie."

Now of course Rob was very anxious to see that well, for he loved everything that had to do with Indians. He thought that he could not wait for his father to show it to him. He ran into the kitchen and began to bother Katie.

“Katie, Katie,” he begged. “Please come into the cellar and show me the old well. I want to look down into it.”

“The Saints preserve us!” cried Katie, lifting up her hands in horror. “What for do ye want to be lookin’ into the well? No, me b’y! It’s I that will be kapin’ away from that same, and thank ye kindly. ’Tis bewitched it is, what with the funny little noises a-comin’ out of it day and night.”

“What funny little noises, Katie?” asked Rob. “Papa says it is rats. He is going to buy a trap to catch them.”

“Rats! A trap!” sniffed Katie scornfully. “’Tis no rats at all do be makin’ them quare little noises. ’Tis bewitched, I tell ye. ’Tis stark bewitched, that well. And I wouldn’t go near it at all for the promise of a new bonnet.”

“What does ‘bewitched’ mean, Katie?” asked Rob again.

Katie wagged her head and mysteriously made the sign of the cross.

“Oh, who will be tellin’ ye that? If it was in the owld country I’d say it was Fairies or maybe the Leprechaun himself. But I never heard tell o’ Fairies in this land, at all. Maybe ’tis something worse. But oh! The funny little noises!”

“*What* noises, Katie?” begged Rob.

“Oh, the little whinin’ and sobbin’, like one wantin’ to get out. ’Tis no rats live in the owld well. Would *rats* be whimperin’ and beggin’ like?”

“Begging, Katie!” cried Rob. “Oh, what do they say? Please, please tell me quickly.”

“La, no! Master Rob,” said Katie, looking sidewise at the little boy, “your Mamma would n’t want me to be frightenin’ ye with tales the likes o’ these.”

“But I’m not frightened, Katie,” said Rob eagerly. “I’m just *interested*.”

“H’m,” said Katie doubtfully, glancing at

the clock. "Whisht! Master Rob! 'Tis a quarter to nine, and time for you to be startin' for school, or you 'll be late."

And indeed, Rob had to run all the way, and reached school barely in time.

Rob's papa did not forget to bring home a rat-trap that night, and after dinner he said, —

"Now, Rob, I am going down cellar to set the trap, and if you want to come with me I will show you the old well."

Of course Rob wanted to go. So Rob's papa took a lighted candle in one hand, and the rat-trap nicely baited with cheese in the other, and they descended the steep cellar stairs together. It was very dark in the cellar, and the candle made queer flares on the walls and ceiling, and lighted up corners which Rob had never before seen. In the very darkest and dimmest corner of all, away in the back cellar, Rob's papa paused, and then Rob saw that in the floor there was a trapdoor with an iron ring, quite like the Arabian Nights!

"It is from somewhere hereabout that Katie says she hears the noises," said Papa.

“We will set the trap on the floor, close beside the wall, and I warrant we shall catch a big rat before many nights are over.” So he set the trap with the spring ready to catch the first greedy rat who should try to steal the cheese.

“Now let us look into the well,” said Rob’s papa. “I have n’t lifted this cover for years. Ugh! It is heavy enough!” He tugged at the iron ring and presently the cover flew back. Down below yawned a great black hole, very deep and seemingly quite empty.

“Here, Rob, take hold of my hand,” said his papa, “and you can look down.” Rob held tightly to his father’s hand, and bending over, peered into the well. The candle which his father held flickered and flamed and shot a shaft of light down into the strange hole.

“I can’t see anything,” said Rob, disappointed. “I don’t think there is any water there. But — but I think I hear something! A queer little noise like water trickling, or somebody whispering very softly.”

“The spring may be bubbling yet,” said his father. “Katie, O Katie!” he called up-

stairs. "Please bring me a tin pail and a ball of stout twine. We will see whether the Indian spring has run dry or not."

"The Saints preserve us!" Rob heard Katie cry in the kitchen above, as she went about to do as she was bid. And again Rob thought he heard a murmuring in the well.

"There is the queer noise again, Papa!" he cried. "It sounds like some one talking a long way off."

"Pooh, pooh!" said Papa. (He was always saying, "Pooh, pooh" at Rob's queer notions.) "Run and get the pail and the cord, Sonny. Katie is afraid to come near the well. Ah! Now we shall soon know."

He tied the cord to the handle of the pail, while Rob held the candle and they watched the pail descend. Down, down it went, until it disappeared into the blackness. "Well, well!" said his father. "Ten, twenty, I must have paid out thirty feet of cord already. I had forgotten that the well was so deep. Hello! There was a splash; hear it, Rob?"

Rob heard,—a quick splash, and again the

queer little noise, a tinkle, a trickle, a rustle, a whisper.

“O Papa,” he cried, “let me draw up the pail, please.”

“Well, be very careful, Son,” said his father. And Rob began to pull on the cord, while his father held tightly to his jacket so that he should not fall down into the deep, black hole. The pail was rather heavy. It bumped against the sides of the well, tinkling and jingling as it came up. Rob thought that it jerked and wobbled strangely. But perhaps his hand was not quite steady, he was so excited. At last the pail came in sight, full of water. They drew it over the edge, Rob stooping eagerly to see. Filled to the brim it was, and running over.

“Clear water, as cold as ice,” said Rob’s Papa, dipping in his finger. “Let us take it upstairs and see it in a better light. I would not have believed that the old spring was still bubbling.”

Very carefully Rob carried the pail of water up the cellar stairs. “Katie, O Katie!” he

called. "See the water from the old well! From thirty feet down in the darkness it came."

"The Saints preserve us!" cried Katie. (She was always saying that.) "I would n't touch water from the witch-well for any money ye could offer."

"It is clear and bright as glass," said Rob's papa.

"O Papa! Let me drink some," cried Rob. "I should so love to taste water from a real Indian spring."

"O Mr. Evans! Don't let the b'y taste it!" begged Katie, clasping her hands. "It will kill him, the p'isen water!"

"No, Rob," said Mr. Evans, "I think Katie is right. It might be dangerous to drink the water. But it looks delicious. What a pity that we cannot use spring water from our own ancestral well, instead of buying it at the store as every one else must!"

"Please, Papa — just one little sip?" begged Rob.

"No, not one little sip, Son. Here, Katie,

empty the pail of water into the sink," said Mr. Evans firmly.

Tremblingly Katie took the pail and went with it to the sink. But she had not turned half the water away when she gave a scream.

"Ow! The whimperin' and cryin'! Hark till it!" she shrieked. And indeed, it seemed to Rob that the water sobbed and moaned as it ran down the sink spout. Suddenly he had an idea.

"It is too bad to let the beautiful fresh Indian spring water run into the horrid old sewer," he said. "Please, Papa, come with me and let me pour it back into the well."

"Pooh, pooh!" laughed Mr. Evans. "What an idea! You are as silly as Katie, Rob. I don't want you to get strange ideas into your head. But — well, come along, since you are so anxious that the famous water should not be wasted. I want to cover up the well tightly, so that no one can fall in."

Downstairs they went once more, Rob carrying the pail half full of water, which he poured back into the well. With a glad *splash* it

joined the hidden spring far, far below, and again Rob felt sure that he caught the sound of a whispering voice, tinkling, trickling, sighing, sobbing, as if it were trying to say something to him, perhaps to thank him. He bent over the well, listening eagerly. But his father pulled him back by the hand.

“Come, Rob,” he said. “I want to put the cover in place, and then we must go upstairs. It is time that you were in bed.”

So they let down the cover with a *bang!* and Rob went away with his father out of the dark cellar and into the gaslight. But the sound of those queer little noises followed after him, upstairs and upstairs, and even after he was in bed.

II

The queer little sounds followed Rob upstairs, and even after he was in bed he could hear them echoing from far below in the cellar. At first they were only little trickly sounds, like water *seekling* afar off. But by and by, when the house was very still, because

everybody except Rob had fallen sound asleep, the noises grew louder and plainer. They grew into a soft murmur, sometimes a sob, sometimes the whisper of a little silver voice. And at the same time there was a gentle knocking. Rob listened and listened as hard as ever he could, and he said to himself, —

“Surely, Katie is right. There is something strange about the cellar, and I think it comes from the old well. What can it be?”

Finally the voice sounded so loud and so plain that Rob could hear distinctly what it was saying, and it seemed to be talking to him.

“Let me out; ah, let me out!” cried the silvery, trickly voice, and again Rob heard the knocking. “Good little boy, you who would not let the water of the Indian spring be wasted, come and free me from my prison of so many years.”

A prisoner! Some one was shut up in the old well! Rob sat up in bed. He must set the prisoner free. He was not a bit frightened at the thought of going down all alone into the cellar, for he knew that there was nothing

more to be afraid of in the dark than in the daylight. He got up and thrust his feet into a pair of slippers and put on his bath robe. Then very softly, so as not to waken anybody in the house, he crept downstairs: down to the floor where his father and mother slept,— he could hear them breathing as he passed the door; down past the library where the books lived and all night long told silent stories to one another in the moonlight; down to the empty dining-room, and through to the kitchen. Here Rob found a candle on a shelf and lighted it. Then, taking this in one hand and holding up his trailing bath robe with the other, he stole down the cellar stairs. The voice was calling now louder than ever, and with it sounded the knocking, which certainly came from the old well.

“Let me out, O kind boy!” sobbed the silvery, tinkling voice. “Let me out. Oh! I thought I was free to-day, but alas! Here I remain yet a prisoner, for how many more long years? O kind little boy, the first one to do me a good turn, let me out, let me out!”

Rob hastened to the corner in which was the old well. And as he drew near, the voice became plainer and plainer, and the knockings louder and louder. He set the candle down on the floor beside the rat-trap which his father had baited that afternoon, and his heart beat fast as he bent over the cover of the well and seized the iron ring in both hands. Should he be able to lift it?

One — two — three! Rob strained hard, but the cover would not budge. One — two — three, again! It was so heavy for a little boy to lift. One — two — three! Once more! Rob felt the cover move a tiny bit. The noises down in the well had ceased suddenly. It was very still. Rob could hear his heart thumping like the screw of a steamboat. Now, for one last time! One — two — *three!* The cover came up suddenly, so suddenly that Rob nearly went over backward. There below yawned the great black hole of the well.

“Oh!” said Rob, drawing a long breath.

“*Oh!*” Was it an echo, or a soft little voice, far, far below?

Rob took up the candle and peered down into the well. But he could see nothing. "Is any one down there?" he asked. At first there was no answer, and then there came a tinkly, trickly sound like water bubbling, which turned at last into a whispered "*Yes!*" There certainly was some one in the old well!

"Who are you?" said Rob, tingling all over with excitement.

"Oh, little friend, kind boy," said the voice, "I am the Fairy of the Indian spring, shut up here for years and years, unable to get out. I have called and called, but you are the first who has come to aid me."

"What can I do to help you?" asked Rob eagerly.

"Let down the bucket as you did this afternoon," said the voice. "Let down the bucket and draw me up."

The pail with the ball of twine lay close beside the well, where Rob's papa had forgotten it that afternoon. Rob set the candle down on the floor and began to lower the pail into the well. Yard after yard after yard the hungry

throat swallowed the cord. Finally he heard the pail splash as it reached the water. He waited a moment. The pail bobbed about and then grew heavy on the cord. Then the silver voice cried, "Draw up, draw up, kind boy!"

Rob pulled on the cord eagerly, — pulled and pulled without looking down into the well, until the pail tinkled against the bricks of the cellar floor. In the flare of the candle-light Rob saw that it was full of water. But that was not all! Standing with feet braced across the top of the pail, clinging to the cord, was the strangest little figure about six inches high; a little figure dressed all in brown, with black hair and bright eyes. When the pail rested on the cellar floor he leaped off and stood before Rob, bowing, with one hand laid upon his head.

And then Rob saw that it was a tiny Indian. His brown dress was soft like deerskin, and his leggings were fringed. His limp black hair fell over a face of red-bronze, with high cheekbones and pouting lips. In his hair he wore a tiny blue feather, perhaps from a blue jay's

wing, and in his hands he carried the sweetest little toy bow, while a quiver of inch-long arrows hung on his shoulders. His feet were covered with moccasins, and he was the exact copy of a Wild West Indian ; only he looked like one seen through the wrong end of an opera-glass.

“ Oh — you must be an Indian Fairy,” cried Rob, with his eyes bulging.

“ Yes, Friend,” said the tiny one. “ I am an Indian Fairy, the Fairy of the Indian spring. And you have brought me up for the second time this day, though you did not see me the first time. This is the second time during fifty years that I have left the well. Ah, must I go back again ? ” Despite the warlike appearance of the little man his silvery voice began to tremble.

“ Tell me all about it,” said Rob soothingly.

“ I am the Fairy who lived by the spring years, and years, and years ago, before the White Men came to Shawmut,” said the Fairy.

“ What is Shawmut ? ” asked Rob, wondering.

“Shawmut is the Indian name of this place,” said the Fairy. “It means the Place of Springs, and it was so named because of the many bubbling springs on the hillside above the river. Oh! there were many, many of us. I had dozens of brothers. But my spring was in the fairest spot. This water was the sweetest and clearest of any. Heigho! How often the great braves used to kneel here for a refreshing draught when they returned from the hunt or from war! They never saw me, for I hid in the moss about the spring. But I loved to look at them, they were so big and wonderful.”

“Oh, what did they look like?” asked Rob eagerly, for Rob loved to hear about Indians.

“They dressed as I do,” said the Fairy. “But sometimes their faces were painted green or red or blue. And I could see no good in that. Sometimes they wore tassels of hair at their belts. Ugh! I did not like that fashion. Sometimes their hands were red, and when they went away the waters of my spring were stained. Ugh! Neither did I like that. But they were brave and strong and

noble. I loved the Red Men, for they lived out of doors in the sweet sunlight, as I did. They loved the fresh air and the blue sky and the green grass. They would have no stifling roof over their heads to shut out the sky ; no four walls to keep off the fresh air. Ugh ! I cannot breathe in a house. I stifle ! I choke !”

“ Then how did you come to be shut up in this house ?” asked Rob, wondering very much.

“ Listen. The White Men came to Shawmut ; White Men with cows and dogs, women and children. They built houses on the Hill, near the bubbling springs, and planted corn. They drove away the Red Men, and I loved them not, for they were different. They wore ugly dark garments, hats and short cropped hair. They lived in close wigwams, and cared nothing for fresh air and blue sky. Neither did they love the trees, but cut them down to burn, and mowed the flowers for their ugly ploughed fields. The woods and the streams meant nothing to them but places wherein they might hunt and fish, which they did gloomily. For they were solemn folk and sad.

They thought it wicked to laugh merrily, as the brook laughs, or to smile like the flowers. Even the little children dared not be too gay, but were afraid of their fathers!"

"That must have been a horrid time for children," said Rob.

"Alas! It was indeed a sad time for everybody," went on the Fairy. "The brave Red Men were gone. Even the rabbits and squirrels were gone. The Hill was peopled with solemn and ugly folk, who dared not be happy, and it was no longer beautiful as before. Yet I could not go away and leave my spring, my dear spring, which ran sweet and clear as ever. It was the favorite fountain of the Puritans, and crouching down under the moss and ferns I watched them come and go, gloomily, filling their buckets and pitchers. But I loved them not, and I hoped that the Red Men would come back and drive them away. But the Red Men never came again."

"And what happened next?" asked Rob, much interested.

"Years went by, and the Hill became

crowded with the White Men's ugly wigwams. The springs still bubbled, but it was a sad song that they sang, for everything was changed. But that was not the worst. Came a day when a man built a house over my very spring! He shut in the bubbling water under a roof, between four ugly walls, where the blue sky could no longer shine upon it nor the fresh air visit it freely! Alas! Would that I had escaped before then. I might have gone earlier, though it would have been sorrowful to desert my lonely spring. But I had not guessed what was about to happen until it was too late. I had not thought that even a White Man could be so cruel as to wall up a living spring. I was asleep under the moss and ferns when they raised the roof over me. Alas! I did not even waken at the sound of their wicked hammers. But when I opened my eyes it was too late. There was a screen between me and the sky!"

"Why did you not run away?" asked Rob sympathetically.

"Oh, you do not understand," answered the

Fairy with a sad little smile. "I might have escaped at any time before the roof covered me. But as soon as there was a roof above my head, and four walls rose around me, I was under the magic spell of the White Men. I could not go away, even though the doors and windows were yet yawning holes. I must remain, even as the well must remain, until some one should take pity on me and set me free."

"And could you find no one to do that in all those years?" cried Rob.

"Alas! No. The people who lived in the house were dull folk who did not believe in Fairies. For many years and many years I have remained shut up in the darkness of this cellar, pining in the deserted well. It is quite useless and forgotten. Long ago the ferns and mosses died, and I have no green thing left to love, nothing beautiful to see."

"Poor Fairy!" said Rob, and the tears stood in his eyes.

"I have cried, I have called, I have knocked on the walls of the well," said the Fairy, "but no one has seemed to hear my voice."

Or if folk heard they have not understood. Years ago some one who stepped as you step, whose voice sounded like yours — I never saw his face — used to come sometimes and listen at the well, and I heard him wish and wonder. But that was all.”

“It must have been my father !” exclaimed Rob, remembering what had been said at the breakfast table.

“But he could not understand what I tried to tell him,” went on the Fairy. “He wondered and walked about, but he always went away without doing anything. It was as if I spoke a foreign language. But you see I do not. You understand me quite well, is it not so ?”

“Oh, yes !” cried Rob. “And yet it is very strange. It is not language such as others speak. It is like trickling water that makes words.”

The Fairy laughed. “It is not language at all,” he said. “But you know it. There were women, too ; women with loud voices and a curious twist to their tongues. They heard

my voice, some of them seemed even to understand what I cried. For I heard them exclaim and wonder and talk of the Fairy Folk. The first time that this happened I was hopeful. Surely, I said to myself, they know the Fairies. They say that they come from a Green Land where many Fairies live. Surely, surely they will love the Little Men of another country. They will understand why I long for green grass and blue sky and fresh air. They will help me to escape. But no! They were cowards. They screamed and fainted when I spoke from the old well. They must have had wicked hearts, for they feared the Fairies. They dared not come near, but complained to the master and mistress, and would not live in the same house with me."

"Silly things!" said Rob. "Katie was one of them."

"So to please them the well was covered," sighed the Fairy, "and then it was worse than ever. Think how dark, how lonely, how ugly a home it was for an Indian Fairy who loved the free, open life of outdoors! Oh, for the

green woods, the sunshine and blue sky ! The song of birds and the odor of flowers ! Oh, to feel the soft green moss, and taste the dew fresh in the morning ! Please let me out, kind boy, that I may know those joys again ! ”

“ Dear Fairy,” said Rob hesitatingly, “ I am so sorry, but to find all these things, save the sky and air, one must now seek far from here. The White Men have driven them away, just as they drove the Indians, the squirrels, and the rabbits. There is no green grass, there are no flowers, no moss, no ferns on all the Hill.”

“ What do you tell me ! ” cried the Fairy. “ My Hill is no longer beautiful ? ”

“ It is beautiful,” said Rob. “ At least, the White Men call it so. But the wigwams are thick and very tall, shutting out the sunlight from the paths between. And these paths are dusty, hard streets, with neither grass nor trees nor flowers.”

“ Oh, why do White Men try so hard to make the world ugly ? ” wailed the poor Indian Fairy. “ How can they live away from

the woods and the flowers and the beautiful, beautiful green grass! Where shall I go? What shall I do?"

Rob thought and wondered, and thought again. And at last he had an idea. "There is a green country not so very far from here," he said. "One goes there in an electric car, — but you don't know what a car is. Never mind. I went there yesterday and brought away some beautiful ferns, growing in the mossy earth."

"Oh, that I might see them!" cried the Fairy eagerly. "One sniff of leafy mould, one breath of the woods lingering about the tufted moss! To lie once more in the shadow of a fern and feel its freshness on my face! Where is this woodsy wonder?"

"It is upstairs in my bedroom," answered Rob. "Will you come with me?"

The Fairy hesitated, looked at the pail of water resting beside the well, and brightened with a sudden thought.

"Yes!" he cried. "I know what may be done. You can set me free, kind boy, you only, of all the folk who have come to the In-

dian spring since the Red Men left it. The spell which binds me to the spring and chains me beneath the roof can only be broken when the water is set free again to mother earth. Yesterday I came near to being emptied into the horrible sewer. You heard my cry as the first of the water was lost. You saved me. For had the pail been emptied then I must have followed. And to what a fate !”

“It empties at last into the ocean,” said Rob.

“And that would have been the end of me,” shivered the Fairy. “Salt water is the one thing which would destroy me utterly. But come now. I know how I may be freed. Take the pail of water and bring me with it to the blessed clump of ferns.”

Rob agreed ; he took up the candle in one hand and the pail of water in the other. Lightly as a bird the Fairy sprang upon the rim of the pail, clinging to the cord. And so they went together up out of the cellar, through the empty kitchen and dining-room ; very softly up the stairs, past the library of silent-

talking books ; up and up, very, *very* creepily past the bedroom door ajar, whence Rob heard the sound of his father and mother snoring peacefully ; up and up and up, tiptoeing so as not to wake Katie, to Rob's own chamber. And there on the window-seat stood a big flower-pot with the beautiful ferns which the day before Rob had dug up in the woods. The Fairy smelled them as soon as he entered the room.

“ Ah ! ” he cried, laying both little hands on his breast, “ How good that is ! Dear boy, empty the water quickly from the pail into the earth brought from the woods, and I shall be free to lie under my dear ferns once more.”

Rob emptied the pail into the flower-pot. And as the last drop of water trickled from the bucket, with a glad cry that sounded like the tiniest of Indian war-whoops, the Fairy leaped into the moist little dell which the ferns made, and curled up against one of the stalks, hugging it lovingly.

“ Dear fern ! ” he cried. “ Dear woodsy fern ! How sweet you smell. Dear moss, how

soft you are! Dear fragrant earth, made of dead leaves and all the ripe finished things of the forest! Oh, I am myself once more. Dear boy, you have made me very happy."

"And you will live here with me in my chamber, always and always, dear Fairy?" begged Rob eagerly. "That will be so good! I shall be happy indeed to have you for my little neighbor. And I will never, never tell any one about you, nor let them disturb your green home."

The Fairy looked at Rob and sighed. "Little friend," he said, "I love you dearly. I would gladly make you happy. But I have yet one more thing to ask of you. Think of it! Even now I am shut under a White Man's roof, — I, an Indian Fairy! So many years in a foreign wigwam, walled in a dark, skyless well! Oh! Let me go back to the green wood. Let me be free once more like the rabbits and the squirrels. Will you set me free, even though it means that you will never see me again?"

Rob looked at the Fairy and his lip trem-

bled. "I hoped" — he began. But he took a long breath and said to himself, "I will not be selfish. I will be kind and do as I would be done by." Then he spoke aloud. "Tell me how I may set you free, dear Fairy, and I will do it."

"Ah, my kind friend!" cried the Fairy, "I knew you would be generous! This, then, you shall do for me. I will sleep to-night in your chamber, and to-morrow, when the sun is high, you shall take up the ferns out of the flower-pot, these ferns all moist with the water of the Indian spring. You shall take them up, and me with them, — though you will not see me after daylight, — and carry them to the woods whence you took them. And when you set them back in the ground of the forest where they grew, then I shall be free, free, free! Oh, dear boy, will you do this for me?"

"Yes, I will do this for you," said Rob gravely.

"Thanks, thanks!" cried the Fairy. "And now, the night is almost done. I think I feel the daylight coming. You will see me no

more. But I shall be sleeping soundly under the fern. And do you likewise go to rest in your little bed. Look ! You are shivering with cold ! But to-morrow do not forget your promise."

"I will not forget," said Rob, feeling indeed very cold and shivery. He crept away to his little bed, and was soon sound asleep, warm and comfy.

III

It was late when Rob woke the next morning. At first he thought that the adventure with the Indian Fairy must have been a dream. But as soon as he sat up in bed he saw the tin pail on the floor beside the window seat, and the fern moist and green in the flower-pot. So he knew that it must all have been true. But he could not see the Fairy himself, though he knew that the little fellow must be snugly curled up under the green fronds of the fern.

When he came down to the breakfast table his father and mother were talking earnestly about something.

“It is a wonder he was n’t killed!” said his Mamma, shuddering. “Why did you ever show him that dreadful well?”

“I shall have the cover screwed down,” said Mr. Evans. “It really is n’t safe. “Hello, Son! You walked in your sleep again last night, did you know it? I suppose you don’t remember. But Mamma found one of your slippers outside the library door this morning, and Katie found the other on the cellar stairs. And Rob! *The cover of the old well was open!* However did you lift it?”

“I don’t remember how I lifted it,” said Rob, quite truthfully, and he looked dazed.

“Well, we can’t have this, you know,” said his father. “I shall have to lock your door every night. But we will have that old well screwed up hereafter. Perhaps that will satisfy Katie, though I think she will not be troubled with any more noises in the wall. She says that there was a big, big rat dead in the trap this morning.”

And indeed, nobody ever heard any more noises in the cellar after Rob helped the In-

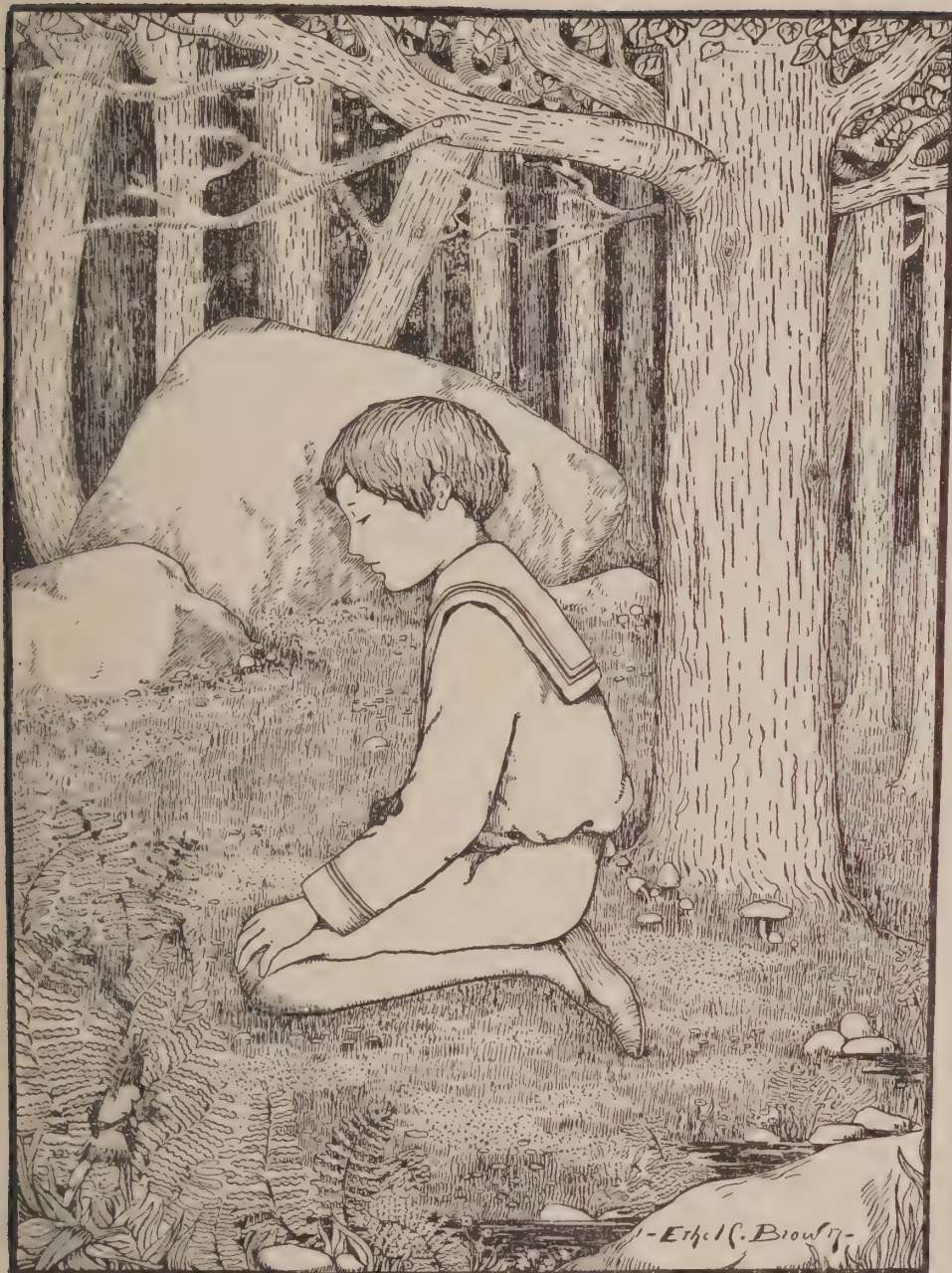
dian Fairy to escape. That very morning, right after breakfast, — for it was a Saturday and there was no school, — he dug up the ferns which he had planted in his flower-pot, and put them in a little basket with the earth around their roots. Then he started to take the electric car which would carry him out of town to the woods.

“Where are you going, Rob?” asked his Mamma, seeing him with cap in hand.

“I am going to take my ferns back to the woods,” Rob answered. “I think it is cruel to keep things that love the sunshine and the fresh air shut up in a house. I am sure that the ferns would much rather be back in the woods, don’t you think so, Mamma?”

“Well, I am sure I never thought of that!” said his Mamma. “But you may go if you will be back in time for dinner.”

So Rob took the ferns to the woods and set them back in their first home under a big gray rock, the prettiest little spot in the world for a Fairy to dwell! But he saw nothing more of the Indian Fairy, though he looked



ROB AND THE INDIAN FAIRY

and looked ; and after he had started for home, went back there again three separate times to look, because he hated to part from his little new friend. But the last time he heard, or thought he heard, a very tiny, far-off, trickly voice say, —

“ Farewell, my friend ! Farewell ! I am free, free, free ! And you shall always be happy when you come to the woods, even if you never see me. For I will make this charm about you, because you were kind. Farewell, farewell ! ”

And this was the last that Rob ever heard of the Indian Fairy, though he went often and often to that same place in the woods ; but the Fairy charm did indeed prove true, and Rob was always very, very happy as soon as he came into the woods, happier than he was anywhere else.

FAIRIES

If I should see a Fairy,
I should not be afraid,
I know so much about them,
From all that I have read.

I've planned how I would greet them,
And what I ought to say ;
I'd have my Wish all ready,
To save the least delay.

I sometimes feel them near me,
But still I cannot see.
I wonder, oh ! I wonder,
Are they afraid of me ?

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